

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 03679 281200Z
ACTION NEA-11

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-----064676 281205Z /72R
O 281005Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8541

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3679

STADIS//////////

FOR NEA/ARN DRAPER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJ: SYRIAN JEWRY

REF: STATE 162535

1. MET WITH TOUTAH AND RABBI HAMRA EVENING JUNE 27. TOUTAH INFORMED ME HE HAD DISCUSSED LIST OF 52 UNMARRIED WOMEN WITH BOTH ABD AL-SAMAD AND MESSAOUD AND ATTEMPTED TO LEAVE LIST WITH EACH OF THEM ON BASIS IT WOULD HELP THEM TO BE FULLY INFORMED IF QUERIED BY HIGHER AUTHORITIES. NEITHER HAD AGREED TO ACCEPT THE LIST OR TO RAISE QUESTION IN ANY WAY THROUGH THEIR CHANNELS. THEIR POSITION, ACCORDING TO TOUTAH, WAS THAT MATTER WAS ALREADY BEFORE PRESIDENCY FOR DECISION AND THEY WOULD BE INFORMED BY PRESIDENCY OR FOREIGN MINISTRY OF THAT DECISION WHEN IT WAS TAKEN. TOUTAH SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO PUSH THEM FURTHER ON THIS MATTER AT THIS TIME. HAMRA AGREED.

2. COMMENT: I AM NOT SURE I SEE WHAT BENEFIT VISIT BY SHALOM COULD HAVE AT THIS TIME ALTHOUGH BOTH EMBASSY AND COMMUNITY WOULD WELCOME HIM IF HE WISHES TO COME. IT IS NOT REALLY A QUESTION OF STIFFENING TOUTAH'S
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BACKBONE OR INITIATING A BUREAUCRATIC PROCEEDING THROUGH SECURITY AUTHORITIES WHO STATE THAT MATTER IS OUTSIDE THEIR JURISDICTION. DAOUDY HAS TOLD ME IN INDIRECT SYRIAN FASHION THAT AS FAR AS HE IS CONCERNED, DECISION IS NEGATIVE FOR THE TIME BEING. THIS MEANS WE MUST FIND A WAY TO RAISE ITS AGAIN DIRECTLY AT THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL. THIS COULD BE DONE EITHER BY

AMBASSADOR SEELYE DURING HIS INTRODUCTORY CALL, OR BY A PRESIDENTIAL LETTER. OTHER POSSIBILITIES MIGHT BE TO ENCOURAGE SOME MEMBER(S) OF CONGRESS TO VISIT SYRIA DURING SUMMER RECESS AND/OR FOR ME TO SUGGEST TO ROWLAND EVANS WHEN HE VISITS SYRIA NEXT WEEK, AND ASSUMING PRESIDENT WILL ACCORD HIM AN INTERVIEW, THAT HE QUESTION PRESIDENT DIRECTLY ABOUT THIS SUBJECT. REQUEST YOUR GUIDANCE ON THIS POINT.

3. I COULD ALSO RAISE THIS QUESTION AGAIN THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTRY, SIAGE AND KADDUR, WHO ARE AWARE IN GENERAL WAY OF OUR INTEREST IN THIS MATTER BUT HAVE NOT SO FAR BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN HANDLING THE PETITIONS OR LISTS. THIS WOULD HAVE A ADVANTAGE OF BROADENING SYRIANR KNOWLEDGE OF OUR CONCERN, BUT WOULD ALSO FACE DIS-ADVANTAGES OF A) HAVING MATTER PASSED THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM WHOSE PAST ATTITUDE ON THE SUBJECT HAS NOT BEEN ENCOURAGING AND B) AROUSING IRE OF DAOUDY, WHO IS SENSITIVE OF HIS PREROGATIVES AND CAN BE VINDICTIVE AND WHO WOULD INTERPRET SUCH AN EFFORT AS AN ATTEMPTED END RUN AROUND HIM. ON BALANCE, I RECOMMEND AGAINST THE FOREIGN MINISTRY APPROACH.
PELLETREAU

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